(d) A Canada-India Joint Venture Programme was initiated by the Canada-India Business Council with the help of Canadian International Development Agency in 1991 with the aim of providing an opportunity to small and medium entrepreneurs to cooperate with each other in the field of technology transfer. The first phase of this programme was held in Canada and the second was organised in India in December, 1991, The next phase is to be held in 1993.

Desecration of Indian Flag

614. SHRIMATI KAMLA SINHA : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that the Indian National Flag was desecrated by the Pro-Khalistanis at the Indian High Commission in Birmingham on the Independence Day;

(b) if so, what are the details thereof; and

(c) what is the reaction of Government in this regard ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI EDUARDO FALEIRO) : (a) and (b) Yes, Sir.

A group of over 30 Sikhs belonging to the Babbar Khalsa and other pro-Khalistani groups interrupted the Independence Day celebrations at the residence of the Indian Assistant High Commissioner in Birmingham, removed the National Flag, smashed the photographs of Gandhiji and Nehru and raised anti-Indian, pro-Khalistani and pro-Pakistani slogans. Later, two of the intruders were apprehended by the Birmingham police.

(c) The Government has taken up this matter with the British authorities who have assured us of cooperation in apprehending the culprits and promised us adequate security arrangements to ensure that such incidents do not recur in the future.

Opening of Portuguese Consulate in Goa

615. SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that Government propose to open a portuguese Consulate in Goa; and

(b) if so, what are the reasons therefor ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI R. L. BHATIA) : (a) and (b) There has been a long standing request on the part of Portugal to open a Portuguese Consulate General in Goa. The principal reasons for this have included provision of consular services to the people of Goa, for which there is considerable demand, and the promotion of economic and commercial ties. After obtaining the concurrence of the State Government of Goa, which was conveyed by them on 21 July, 1992, Government have accorded permission for the opening of a Portuguese Consulate General in Goa. In acceding to the Portuguese request, Government have also taken into account the new atmosphere of improved bilateral relations between the two countries.

Strengthening of NAM and South-South Cooperation

616. SHRI S. K. T. RAMACHANDRAN : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state the steps proposed to be taken by Government to impress upon the developing and non-aligned countries and for strengthening the Non-aligned Movement and South-South Cooperation in view of the threat to the unity, sovereignty integrity and economic and social development of the developing countries ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI EDUARDO FALEIRO) : India continues to take requisite steps at all appropriate fora to impress upon developing and Non-aligned countries the need to strengthen NAM and South-South cooperation. For example, at the recent

NAM and G-15 Summits India played an active role in strengthening the Movement by reaffirming its relevance, defining its agenda and projecting the imperative of South-South Cooperation on the basis of collective self-reliance.

617. [*Transferred to 7th December, 1992*]

Indo-Pak Relations

618. SHRI DEBABRATA BISWAS : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) whether Indo-Pakistan relations have of late, been subjected to strains;

(b) if so, the causes therefor; and

(c) what measures Government propose to take to maintain cordial relations with Pakistan ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI EDUARDO FALEIRO) : (a) to (c) Pakistan has not, unfortunately, changed the direction of its policy towards India and it continues to aid and abet terrorism in Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir. This approach is not conducive to the creation of mutual trust and confidence or to the conduct of a meaningful dialogue for normalisation of relations.

Government trust that Pakistan will stop its support to terrorism and subversion directed against India, abandon its negative attitude and join in efforts to establish good neighbourly relations.

It is in this context that India remains committed to continuing the bilateral dialogue with Pakistan authorities at appropriate levels.

French Interests in Nuclear Dialogue in South Asia

619. SHRI DEBABRATA BISWAS : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) whether France have shown interests in the nuclear dialogue in the South Asia recently; and

(b) if so, the reaction of Government of India thereto ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI EDUARDO FALEIRO) : (a) and (b) France has expressed interest in bilateral discussions with India at senior official level on matters relating to disarmament, non-proliferation, nuclear energy and related matters. There is also a change in the French vote this year in the General Assembly on Pakistan sponsored resolution "Establishment of a Nuclear Weapon Free Zone in South Asia", on which they had previously abstained. It was explained by the French that this change is in keeping with their decision to accede to the Non-Proliferation Treaty. India has conveyed to the French authorities that it cannot accept the Pakistan proposal for 5-nation talks as it maintains that nuclear disarmament issues should be addressed on a global and not piecemeal basis.

Proposal for bus service between Agratala and Calcutta through Bangladesh

620. SHRI SUDHIR RANJAN MAJUMDAR : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government have received any proposal from Transport Ministry for bus service between Agartala and Calcutta through Bangladesh;

(b) if so, whether the proposal has been taken up with Government of Bangladesh through diplomatic channel;

(c) what is the reaction of Bangladesh Government to this proposal; and

(d) whether the proposal has been discussed with Bangladesh Government at any level when Prime Minister of that country visited India with a delegation of high officials recently, if so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI EDUARDO FALEIRO) : (a) Yes, Sir.